

ABMs Start Urged by Chief Of A-Weapons

By George C. Wilson
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SAN FRANCISCO, March 16—It is of "crucial importance" for the United States to go ahead immediately with an antimissile defense, the chief of the Government's nuclear weapons laboratory said today.

Dr. Harold Agnew, head of the Atomic Energy Commission's Los Alamos, N.M., Scientific Laboratory Weapons Division, said the first step should be to put the missile defense around U.S. ICBM sites.

Agnew, declaring he was speaking as a private citizen and not for the Laboratory, said failure to produce and deploy the Nike X missile defense now would set the whole program back for "two or three years."

The companies working on Nike X are ready for the next step but will disband their technical teams and convert their facilities to other uses if the system is kept in suspension again this year.

United Front Broken

Agnew gave these views in an interview following his appearance on a discussion program at the Air Force's Association convention here. Even though he spoke as a private citizen, his prestige in the nuclear field plus his government post breaks the united front of the Johnson Administration on the anti-missile issue.

President Johnson is trying to negotiate an agreement under which neither the U.S. nor Russia would go forward with missile defenses. Russia already has installed at least

a partial missile defense. Agnew said the U.S. should do likewise even while negotiations are going on.

[Following a course outlined by President Johnson, the Senate Armed Services Committee today recommended a start on construction of anti-missile defenses unless an early agreement is reached with the Soviet Union, the Associated Press reported.]

Over 10-Year Period

Agnew said Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara's estimate of \$40 million for a full-scale missile defense "is quite cheap insurance" when compared with Vietnam spending. The \$40 billion would be spent over ten years.

Agnew ripped into many of the assumptions of McNamara and Dr. Jerome Wiesner about Nike X. Wiesner is a former presidential science adviser who has been a leader in disarmament efforts.

"There was a time when what was good for me militarily was probably by definition bad, or a minus, for the other nations," Agnew said.

"Of late however," he added, "the Defense and State Departments seem to have a new set of conditions: what is good for me should also be good for my adversary and vice versa; as such systems can only be considered good if they contribute to stability."

This refers to McNamara's argument that the United States and Russia would upset the military balance between them if either side built an anti-missile system. McNamara favors relying on an overwhelming offense,